THE HENRY L. STIMSON CENTER

Non-UN Peacekeeping Operations in the Middle East

Mona Ghali

Occasional Paper No. 12 May 1993

Pragmatic steps toward ideal objectives

The Henry L. Stimson Center
21 Dupont Circle, NW
Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 223-5956 Fax (202) 785-9034

Summary

War may seem obsolete among major industrial powers, but it has been all too frequent among Middle Eastern states. The list is lengthy: the 1948 Palestine War, the 1956 Suez War, the 1962–1967 war in Yemen, the 1967 June War, the 1973 October War, the Lebanese Civil War, the 1978 and 1982 Israeli invasions of Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq War, and the 1991 Gulf War. Since 1948 the United Nations has been involved constantly in truce observation and peacekeeping operations in the region, to such an extent that traditional peacekeeping is often referred to as the "Middle East model." The peacekeepers monitor cease fires and force separation agreements. Their role is not to resolve territorial or political disputes but to buy time for others to do so, contributing in the meantime to the maintenance of regional peace and security. They attend to the outward signs of conflict and not the underlying motivations. In some instances, their deployment has been paralleled by successful peace negotiations, as between Egypt and Israel in the late 1970s. Helping to implement that peace successfully since 1982 has been the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), a peacekeeping organization that is not United Nations-sponsored.

At about the same time that the MFO deployed in the Sinai, another non-UN peacekeeping force deployed in Beirut, Lebanon. Initially successful at a very specific task, it eventually ran afoul of the political-military chaos that afflicted Lebanon in the early- to mid-1980s. It was, if anything, less successful than the much-maligned UN Interim Force in Lebanon, which has operated in southern Lebanon since 1978 without the respect or the support of major players in Lebanon's tragic drama.

The contrast between the two political settings—the Sinai and Lebanon—and their impact on peacekeeping could not be more stark. The Sinai operation, undertaken with the blessing of Egypt and Israel, had and still has everything going for it that peacekeepers need to do their job well, while the Lebanon operations have had almost none of it. In the Sinai, peacekeeping succeeds, while in Lebanon it has failed. When the political setting is not ripe for peacekeeping, the identity of the sponsoring organization does not much matter: peacekeepers and their mission will be placed at risk, even if they are drawn from the world's premier military powers. At a time when the United Nations finds itself coping with a rising number of difficult missions as well as rising criticism of its performance, this is a crucial point to keep in mind.

The two cases in this paper were written as self-contained units structured to facilitate comparative analysis. Readers are invited and encouraged to make such comparisons.[1]

---

1. Those who would like a complete comparative analysis of peacekeeping operations by the United Nations are invited to order a copy of William J. Durch and Barry M. Blechman, *Keeping the Peace: The United Nations in the Emerging World Order* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, March 1992), or William J. Durch, ed., *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

Contents

About the Project

In the Spring of 1990, the Henry L. Stimson Center received a grant from the Ford Foundation to study UN peacekeeping and how it might be improved. The study culminated in the publication of *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis* edited by William J. Durch (St. Martin's Press, 1993), which examines the political, financial, and organizational setting for peacekeeping operations and presents twenty case studies of UN operations from 1947 to 1991. This paper examines the efforts of non-UN peacekeeping forces in the Middle East, and was also made possible by support from the Ford Foundation.

The author would like to thank Richard Nelson for his critical comments on this paper. However, responsibility for errors and omissions rests solely with the author.

About the Author

Mona Ghali works for a human rights monitoring organization based in Jerusalem. She has worked previously as a political risk analyst, focusing on the Middle East. She holds an MA in Middle East studies from the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (1988) and an SB from the University of Western Ontario (1985).

Non-UN Peacekeeping Operations in the Middle East

Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai: 1982–Present

The Multinational Force and Observers in Sinai (MFO) replaced the second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) and absorbed the US civilian-staffed Sinai Field Mission (SFM) that supported UNEF II.[1] As such, there was considerable pressure for the force to succeed, first, as a vindication of the United States's mediary role in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of March 26, 1979 and, second, as a potential model for other non-UN peacekeeping forces. As a US-sponsored force, both politically and, in large part, financially, the MFO provided Israel with the security guarantees it demanded but left Egyptian President Anwar Sadat susceptible to the Arab charge that Egypt had become neo-imperialism's latest victim. To vitiate such claims, the MFO has had to prove itself an impartial as well as multinational force. To date, it has been consistently successful in doing so. Its continued presence is necessary because of the continuing tensions on Israel's other borders and because peace in the Middle East remains partial. MFO's presence helps sustain the peace in the Sinai, but also makes it clear that any resumption of hostilities between Egypt and Israel would have to push aside international contingents first, potentially including troops from the United States.

Origins

When President Sadat made the journey from Cairo to Jerusalem in November 1977, he consciously broke with former President Gamal Abdel Nasser's heritage and wrote his own political history unencumbered by the "rejectionist" Arab line. By abandoning obligatory Arab nationalist rhetoric and subordinating Arab unity to Egyptian national interests, Sadat had virtually exiled himself and Egypt from the Arab world. He was prepared to bear the inevitable recriminations of his Arab counterparts in order to do what his predecessor could not, either by coercion or conciliation—reclaim the Sinai for Egypt and restore the country's territorial integrity, lost in 1967.

Nasser had said:

> I am a leader who is bombed everyday in his own country, whose army is exposed and whose people are naked. I have the courage to tell our people the unfortunate truth—that whether they like it or not, the Americans are masters of the world. I am not going to be the one who surrenders to the Americans. Someone else will come in my place who will have to do it.[2]

---

1. The first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) was created in response to the 1956 Suez crisis to supervise a ceasefire between Egypt and British, French, and Israeli forces and to monitor the withdrawal of these foreign forces from Egyptian territory. United Nations Emergency Force II was created in response to the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. See Mona Ghali, "United Nations Emergency Force I: 1956–1967" and "United Nations Emergency Force II: 1973–1979," in William J. Durch, ed., *Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press,1993), 104–151.
2. Mohammad H. Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (New York: Quadrangle, 1975), 96–97.

As it were, Nasser was prescient. Sadat would be that "someone else" who recognized the political truth that while the Soviets could offer arms and half-hearted political support, the Americans possessed leverage with Israel and could extend economic aid. While he often overestimated that leverage and, conversely, underestimated Israeli independence of action, his bid to recover the Sinai culminated with the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 and the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty in March 1979, which partially applied the formula "land for peace" consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967.

The Camp David Accords

The Camp David Accords were signed on September 17, 1978, by President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and witnessed by US President Jimmy Carter. They are twin documents. The first, "A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel," provided for a peace treaty within three months, leading to a phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai over a three-year period; demilitarized areas and a buffer zone occupied by a peacekeeping force mandated to verify the Treaty's security arrangements; and normalized relations between the two countries following the conclusion of the treaty.

The second accord, "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East," was intended as a basis for a "just, comprehensive, and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict." But, from the start it was interpreted differently by the three leaders, each according to his own interests and biases. For President Carter it was the basis for "linkage" between a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace and a permanent solution to the Palestinian issue. For example, Carter believed that he had reached an implicit understanding with Begin for the cessation of new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.[3]

For Sadat, the "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" was a means by which he could defend himself against his Arab critics who railed against his apostasy from the Arab cause. By referring to this second accord, Sadat could claim that he had not abandoned the Palestinians in his bid to recover the Sinai, but had negotiated on the basis of respect for Palestinian autonomy and self-determination. Between 1978 and October 1981, when he was assassinated, Sadat never openly indicated that he regretted either the 1977 trip to Jerusalem or signing the Camp David Accords and the 1979 peace treaty. Indeed, he often scorned his Arab contemporaries for their lack of vision and imagination, and it was often this, almost condescending, manner that reinforced their indignation. Sadat could chide the Syrians and blithely spurn the Gulf Arabs' money because of his uncommon faith in his American allies.

---

3. All along, Carter considered these "facts on the ground" to reinforce the irreversibility of occupation. Yet Begin disclaimed any pledges regarding new settlements, except for a three-month suspension. Middle Eastern specialists at the State Department warned U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance of their misgivings about a soft U.S. position on Israeli settlements. Vance conveyed this opinion to President Carter who felt he could not derail the Camp David Accords. Since Sadat agreed to the wording of the document, the Accords were signed. (Background interview)

In contrast, Begin felt he had conceded enough in returning the Sinai to Egyptian sovereignty. While he accepted the wording of "legitimate rights" of the Palestinians and the implementation of UN Resolution 242 "in all its parts," he considered the return of the Sinai as a fulfillment of 242, and rejected the Arab, US, and European interpretation of the resolution to include all lands confiscated after 1967. Since the Sinai was not part of *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel), disengagement was an acceptable price for removing Egypt from the ranks of the confrontation states. On the question of Jerusalem or the West Bank (which are both considered parts of *Eretz Israel*), the Israeli government was unyielding. According to Ezer Weizman, Begin saw the withdrawal from the Sinai as "the end of the story."[4]

Therefore, while the Camp David process produced a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace, it could not go beyond bilateral issues to resolve the Palestinian problem and the return of other Arab lands captured in 1967. During the Baghdad summit in November 1978, Arab states condemned Egypt and the Accords, threatened Cairo with an economic and political boycott should it sign a treaty with Israel, transferred the headquarters of the Arab League from Cairo to Tunis, and proposed an alternative formula for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories consistent with Resolution 242, the creation of a Palestinian state, and the right of all states in the region to live in peace and security.[5]

The March 1979 Peace Treaty

The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was signed in March 1979, six months after the signing of the Camp David Accords. The treaty: 1) terminated the state of war between Egypt and Israel; 2) provided for an Israeli phased withdrawal of its armed forces and civilians from the Sinai behind the international boundary between Egypt and mandated Palestine "without prejudice to the issue of the status of the Gaza Strip;" 3) established full normal relations between the two countries upon completion of an interim Israeli withdrawal within nine months; 4) established security arrangements including limited force zones on Egyptian and Israeli territory, and provision for UN forces and observers to be stationed in a buffer zone; and 5) guaranteed freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Suez, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Strait of Tiran.

During the following two years, efforts to secure a United Nations Force and Observers as provided for in the Treaty proved unproductive. The scheduled date for the deployment of a UN force to supervise the disengagement agreements was January 26, 1980, to coincide with Israel's withdrawal to the El Arish-Ras Mohammad line. UNEF II's mandate expired in mid-1979, and the force withdrew. Israel would not accept United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) observers as a substitute for UNEF II.[6]

---

4. Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981) as quoted in Fred J. Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 410.
5. Ibid., 411.
6. The Security Council created the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization to supervise the 1948 truce in Palestine. See Mona Ghali, "United Nations Truce Supervision Organization," in Durch, ed., *Evolution of UN Peacekeeping*, 84–103.

Tel Aviv considered the unarmed observers unable to enforce the terms of the treaty.[7] As an interim measure, however, the parties agreed that the (also unarmed) US Sinai Field Mission would discharge the responsibilities originally intended for the UN forces.[8]

In response to the Egyptian government's request for a UN force, the President of the Security Council announced on May 18, 1981, that the United Nations would not be able to provide a peacekeeping force to verify the implementation of the security arrangements in the peace treaty. An anticipated Soviet Union veto in the Security Council blocked its deployment. As a result, President Carter's pledge, formalized in identical letters to Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin on March 26, 1979, "to take steps necessary to ensure the establishment of an acceptable alternative multinational force" should a UN force be impracticable, came into effect.

Serious attention was given to the creation of an alternative force between January and February 1981, preceding the UN's formal decision to absent itself from the issue. Negotiations culminated with the signing of the Protocol to the Treaty of Peace on August 3, 1981, establishing the MFO.

Political Support

The United States, Israel, and Egypt all recognized that the peace treaty was in large part dependent on an impartial and credible force to guarantee the observance of its security arrangements. Thus, all three parties had a stake in the MFO's success. The US commitment was commensurate with its interests in securing a stable peace between Israel and Egypt and in vindicating its role as mediator of the bilateral peace accords. By helping Egypt step outside the group of Arab confrontation states, the United States greatly reduced the possibility of a fifth Arab-Israeli war and thus the potential for superpower intervention, but in so doing it also incurred the opposition of the Soviet Union, some Europeans, and all other Arab states. Its commitment to MFO can be measured not only by its financial support, but also by the political will manifest in its efforts to resolve remaining differences between Israel and Egypt, and to secure participants for the multinational force.

The Egyptians initially wanted a symbolic force, only observers. In contrast, the Israelis pressed for a force of 5,000–10,000 troops. In hindsight, the Israeli government's concern over Egypt's commitment to the peace treaty, and the lengths it went to extract American guarantees for its security, were excessive. But at the time, the US had to take these genuine concerns into account and find a compromise between the two positions.

The Egyptian government preferred a UN force and insisted that the US government should exert its considerable influence at the Security Council to secure one. It was disturbed by the lack of enthusiasm and initiative for a UN force displayed by the Reagan

---

7. *The U.S. Sinai Support Mission* (United States Sinai Field Mission Publication, January 13, 1976), 1.
8. The mission operated a tactical early warning system at the Giddi and Mitla passes in the Sinai from 1975 through January 1980. From April 1980 to April 1982, the mission monitored implementation of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, mainly verifying and inspecting force levels and fortifications through both aerial reconnaissance and ground patrols. It had an authorized ceiling of 200 American civilians.

administration's Ambassador to the UN, Dr. Jeane Kirkpatrick. Both Kirkpatrick and the administration preferred a non-UN force, and held that it was quite desirable to do something independent of the Organization.

The three parties did agree to request the UN Security Council to vote on a UN force if nine favorable votes (a working majority) could be guaranteed. They wanted the Soviets to veto the proposal, after demonstrating that it had the support of the majority of Council members. When informal consultations indicated that the nine votes could not be guaranteed, the plan was abandoned.

The political atmosphere outside the US, Egypt, and Israel was antagonistic to the separate peace treaty. Moscow was not prepared to endorse a product of unilateral US mediation. The treaty was more than a political slight to the Soviet Union. Moscow had consistently asserted that its role in the Middle East should be commensurate with its position as a great power. By denying the Kremlin any role in the peace process, the US virtually guaranteed its opposition to the treaty and its support of the Arab hardline states.

The Europeans did not want to identify themselves with a separate peace treaty that dealt ambiguously with the Palestine problem. They pursued separate formulas more closely aligned with the general Arab disposition supporting an exchange of "land for peace." The European Community countries lacked confidence that the Camp David peace process would go beyond a separate Egypt-Israel peace. US Secretary of State Alexander Haig first approached the Australians to participate in the Sinai peace force, but their commitment was contingent on European support. After the assassination of Sadat in early October 1981, the United States worried that the entire peace process might come unglued. Haig appealed to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and French President François Mitterand at the Yorktown Summit (October 16–19, 1981) to participate in the Sinai peace force, suggesting that without European support the entire Camp David peace process could collapse. On November 23, European Community Foreign Ministers announced the participation of French, British, Dutch, and Italian governments in the MFO. The Australian and New Zealand governments also offered contingents to the force.

In contrast, Arab opposition to the treaty was unequivocal. The Arabs saw the treaty as weakening the Arabs' negotiating position. Some, such as Mohammad Heikal, perceived the Treaty as the subordination of Egyptian interests to US security interests. According to Heikal, although Sadat recovered the Sinai, which the Israelis were never interested in annexing, it was on "terms which safeguarded the interests of America and Israel at the expense of Egypt. Sinai, in effect, became an integral element in an American-planned and organized Middle East security system."[9]

According to Patrick Seale, the Camp David Accords were particularly painful for Syria's president because he had unusual confidence that the Carter Administration

---

9. Mohammad H. Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat* (New York: Random House, 1983), 99.

would pursue a comprehensive settlement. While communication with Washington was maintained after the Accords were signed, by 1979 Assad's alienation was almost total. He felt he had not only been slighted, but more importantly believed Syria's vital interests had been deliberately undercut.[10]

Even more disconcerting to the Syrians than the United States' position was Sadat's decision to strike a separate deal, without adequate provisions being made for the rest of the occupied territories. There were two principal fears. First, with Egypt no longer one of the confrontation states, Israel could pursue a more assertive policy, politically and militarily, and be less inclined toward further territorial concessions. Second, if other Arab states were to support Sadat, Syria would become politically marginalized. Thus, Asad was prepared to temporarily suspend the historic Damascus-Baghdad rivalry in order to preclude a temperate Arab response to the Camp David Accords.

The initial response from Riyadh manifested the customary non-committal Saudi position. Riyadh had waited until an anti-Camp David position had coalesced before reluctantly joining its ranks. The Camp David Accords posed a problem for the Saudis because opposing them meant opposing their traditional American allies. This consideration was not enough to keep the Saudis from condemning Egypt at the Baghdad Summit.

Mandate

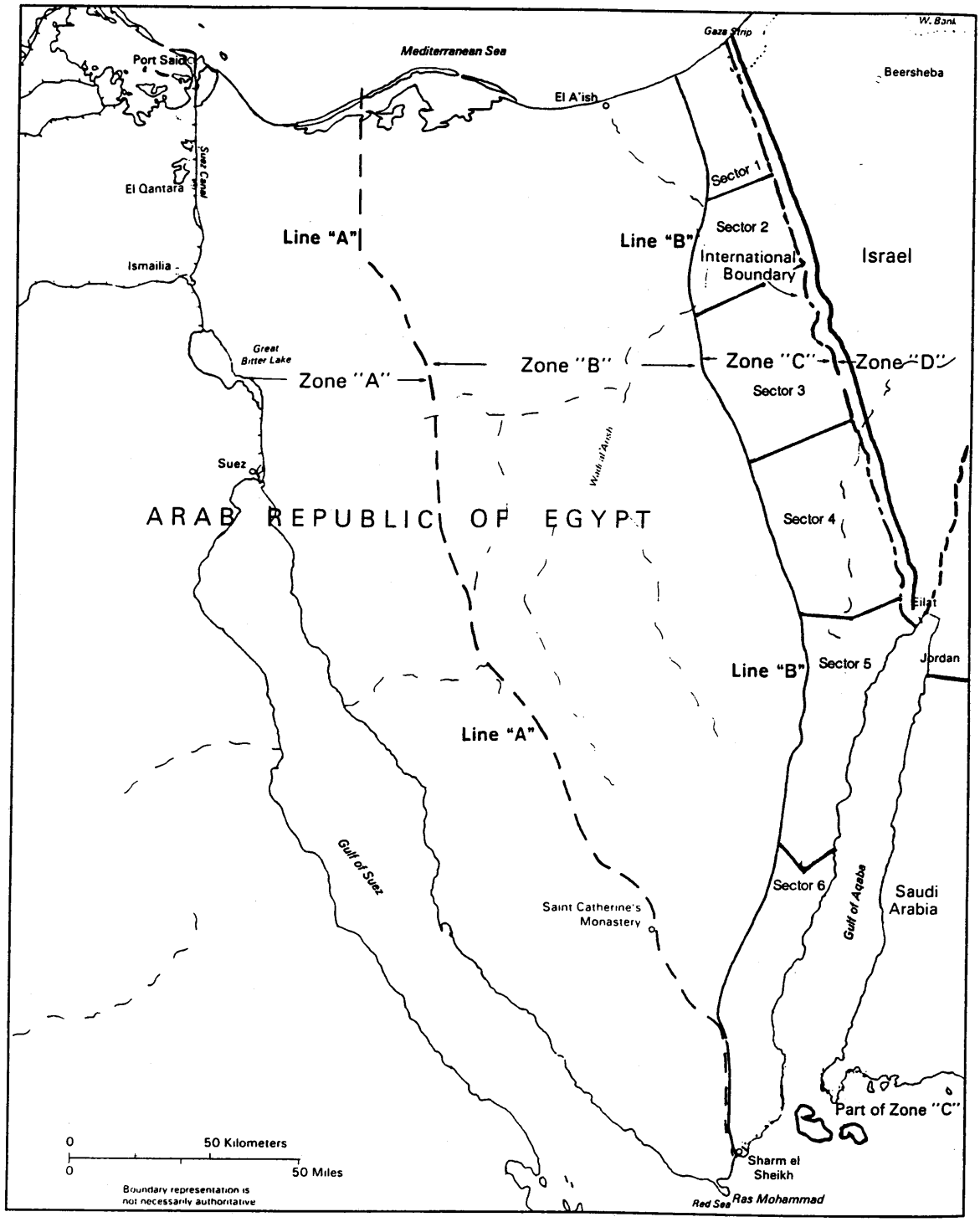
The mandate of the MFO is derived from the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty and its Protocol. The former provides for a UN force to supervise the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai peninsula and the implementation of security arrangements. John Mackinlay, a former participant in the MFO, states:

> There are few aspects of the peacekeeping tasks specified in either [the treaty or the protocol] which required further expansion or interpretation by the military staff of the multinational force headquarters before they could be applied in real terms to the ground. As executive documents for a buffer zone situation they were complete and thorough working instructions....So far no peacekeeping force had ever deployed in the past with such a complete working document as a mandate.[11]

Articles 2 through 5 of Annex 1 of the Treaty ("Protocol Concerning Israeli Withdrawal and Security Arrangements") determine the final lines and zones for the respective forces and the accompanying security arrangements for each area, which MFO is mandated to verify. As the map below indicates, there are three security zones in the Sinai (A, B, and C) and one zone (D) in Israeli territory bordering the Egyptian-Israeli frontier. The perimeter of Zone A is established by the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Suez to the west, and by line A to the east. An Egyptian mechanized infantry division with a maximum of 22,000 personnel, its military installations, field fortifications, and early warning systems are permitted to be stationed in this zone. Zone B ranges from line A

---

10. Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 309.
11. John Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers: An Assessment of Peacekeeping Operations at the Arab-Israeli Interface* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 171–72.



Sources: *The Multinational Force and Observers, Servants of Peace* (Rome: MFO Headquarters, November 1990).

Figure 1:
Force Separation Zones, Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty

eastward to line B. Here, four Egyptian border unit battalions containing up to 4,000 personnel may be deployed with associated military installations and field fortifications.[12] Zone C ranges from line B to the International Boundary and the Gulf of Aqaba on the east. This zone is restricted to Egyptian civil police and forces armed with light weapons. Zone D, in Israel, runs from the International Boundary eastward to line D. There, up to four Israeli infantry battalions staffed by a maximum of 4,000 Israeli personnel are permitted. These arrangements, in effect, create a demilitarized buffer zone (C) occupied by the MFO and flanked by Israeli and Egyptian force and arms limitation zones.[13]

The Protocol of August 1981 established the MFO as an alternative to the UN force. According to the Protocol, the mission of the MFO is to assume the functions and responsibilities originally assigned to the UN Forces and Observers, namely, to:

- Conduct reconnaissance patrols and operate check points, observation posts, and sector control centers along the international boundary and line B, and throughout Zone C.
- Periodically verify the implementation of the security arrangements no less than bimonthly unless otherwise agreed by the Parties.
- Provide additional verification of violations or complaints within forty-eight hours at the request of one of the parties.
- Guarantee freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran.

Influenced by Nasser's request to Secretary General U Thant in May 1967 to withdraw UNEF I, the Israelis pressed for and obtained assurances that the withdrawal of MFO would require approval by both parties. According to the Treaty:

> The Parties agree not to request withdrawal of the United Nations personnel and that these personnel will not be removed unless such removal is approved by the Security Council of the United Nations, with the affirmative vote of the five Permanent Members, unless the Parties otherwise agree (Article 4 (2)).

In accordance with the principle articulated in Article 4, the Protocol allowed for the amendment of the security arrangements at the mutual agreement of the parties.

Funding

The costs of the MFO are borne equally by Cairo, Tel Aviv and Washington. This tripartite division was formalized with the exchange of identical letters on August 3, 1981 between Alexander Haig and Foreign Affairs Ministers Kamal Hassan Ali and Yitzhak Shamir, whereby the United States pledged to:

---

12. MFO *Annual Report*, Rome, April 25, 1990.
13. The Peace Treaty, its Annex, and the 1981 Protocol detailing the structure and operations of the MFO are contained in *The Multinational Force and Observers, Servants of Peace* (Rome: MFO Headquarters, November 1990).

> contribute one-third of the annual operating expenses of the MFO. The US will be reimbursed by the MFO for the costs incurred in the change of station of US Armed Forces provided to the MFO and for the costs incurred in providing civilian observers to the MFO. For the initial period (July 17, 1981–September 30, 1982) during which there will be exceptional costs connected with the establishment of the MFO, the US agrees to provide three-fifths of the costs, subject to the same understanding concerning reimbursement.[14]

This arrangement was somewhat ad hoc and evolved from the US position that it should not be solely responsible for covering the Force's financial costs. During the first year of operation, the US contributed $135 million and Egypt and Israel provided $45 million each. Of the $197 million total expenses for fiscal year (FY) 1982, $101 million was allocated to building and facilities and was borne principally by the United States. With the initial start-up costs paid, expenses for the following fiscal year (October 1982–September 1983) were greatly reduced. The US contributed $25.1 million, and Egypt and Israel provided $31.4 million each.

Over the past several years, in line with US congressional budget cuts, the funds made available to the MFO's operations and maintenance have been gradually reduced. Any reduction in the US contribution is automatically matched with cuts in the contributions of the governments of Israel and Egypt. The MFO budget for FY 1991 was set at $60 million, in comparison with $73.7 million for FY 1988, $80.7 million for FY 1987, and $90 million for FY 1986 (all in current dollars). In 1988, 100 support personnel were cut from each of the three battalions, and nine remote sites were closed. In 1990, about 90 support positions were cut. The $60 million budget for FY 1991 was a 17 percent reduction, reflecting the first phase in a three-year plan to reduce the budget to $56 million by FY 1993.[15]

The US has increasingly solicited its allies for financial assistance with MFO. Consistent with Washington's effort to have Japan assume a greater financial responsibility in collective security of the industrialized countries, Tokyo agreed in October 1988 to contribute $1 million to the operation, designated specifically for salaries of civilian personnel and food. The payment was increased to $1.5 million for FY 1989 and remained at that level for 1990.[16] Efforts to secure a parallel donation from Germany are underway, but given Bonn's preference for using Western aid to rebuild its eastern neighbors, Washington may find the Germans less receptive.

Since 1985, the MFO's financial situation has been complicated by claims and litigation expenses connected with the deaths of 248 American MFO personnel in the December 1985 crash of a chartered Arrow Air DC-8 at Gander, Newfoundland. The operator of the aircraft and its insurer brought a $130 million suit against the MFO, which in turn filed a countersuit. On the eve of the trial in 1987, the Force was awarded a $10

---

14. Letters addressed to the Egyptian and Israeli Foreign Ministers Kamal Hassan Ali and Yitzhak Shamir, respectively, from Alexander Haig, August 3, 1981. *The Multinational Force and Observers*, 62-63.
15. *The Multinational Force and Observers*, 18.
16. Ibid., 19.

million financial settlement. Outstanding claims by the US government in connection with the Gander crash and other MFO-related accidents totalled $19.7 million. The MFO made its final payment on these claims in November 1990, drawing on the Arrow Air settlement, operating surpluses from previous fiscal years, and compounded interest on investment of these funds.

Finally, as a result of the stable commitment of the three financing partners, the MFO has been able to circumvent the kind of funding difficulties commonplace with UN peacekeeping operations. Although the Force has been affected by overall US defense expenditure cuts, it has been able to adapt without seriously impairing its operations. As long as the three Contributing Fund participants continue to identify their interests with the MFO's presence in Sinai, they will likely provide their designated share as they have routinely done in the past.

Wealthier troop contributing countries are reimbursed the marginal costs of their deployment (expenses that would not have been incurred had their battalions remained at home), and all field operational and support costs. Developing countries contributing troops are reimbursed at the going UN rates for United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (nominally about $1,000 per person-month, but in recent years closer to $600, because of deficits in contributions to UNIFIL; however, even the reduced rate exceeds the marginal cost of deployment for these less-well-paid troops).[17]

Planning and Implementation

The MFO has the good fortune to have had its operational specifications spelled out clearly in the Peace Treaty and Protocol. There was plenty of time to plan its deployment, recruit its personnel, and secure its funding, and the logistical and technical expertise of the United States was at its service.

Size and Composition of the Force

Ten countries originally contributed contingents at the request of MFO's Director General and with the approval of the Israel and Egypt. They included Australia, Colombia, Fiji, France, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK, and Uruguay, in addition to the US itself, collectively comprising a force of about 2,500. Norway, not officially a participating state, has in the past provided the Force Commander, in addition to a small group of officers for the headquarters staff. Each participating state agreed to contribute personnel for two or five years, with the exception of the United States, which is obligated to maintain its troops for the duration of the operation to ensure the credibility of the force.

The Carter administration was initially reluctant to commit US troops to Egypt. Carter was concerned that the Arab states opposed to the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty would read conspiracy theories into American participa-

17. Interview 95A, February 7, 1992. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon was deployed in 1978 following Israel's invasion of Lebanese territory. See Mona Ghali, "United States Interim Force in Lebanon: 1978-Present," in Durch, ed., *Evolution of UN Peacekeeping*, 181–205.

tion. The Reagan administration, in contrast, did not share its predecessor's reluctance, indeed saw an opportunity to begin exorcising the "Vietnam syndrome," and committed one battalion of up to 800 troops and a maximum of 1,200 American personnel altogether.[18]

Matching force composition with the desires of the two local parties proved somewhat tricky. Israel does not accept contingents from nations with which it does not have diplomatic relations, and a dominant US presence in the force was crucial to maintain its confidence in the Peace Treaty. Egypt, on the other hand, consistent with its initial preference for United Nations peacekeepers, favored a multinational force. Already ostracized by the Arab states, Cairo initially saw little benefit in giving its adversaries one more stone to throw by accepting a force composed principally of US units. However, it came to recognize the practical benefits of American participation. As a result, Egypt agreed to the deployment of one US battalion, civilian observers, and logistical support. Cairo rejected participation of African contingents to avoid confrontation with the Organization of African Unity over the Peace Treaty, and both Israel and Egypt considered contributions from the Soviet Union or its Eastern European satellites undesirable.[19]

Nonetheless, European and non-western participation remained important to impart international sanction to the Peace Treaty. Fiji, a consistent participant in UN peacekeeping forces, was the first country to offer troops. Thus, the Colombian government's offer to send troops was regarded as the first political breakthrough for the recruitment effort.

Of the ten original participants, Australia withdrew its contingents in April 1986. There had been some question as to whether New Zealand, which together with Australia supplied the Force with a Rotary Wing Aviation Unit (RWAU), would also withdraw its troops. The New Zealand government reaffirmed its participation but adopted a new mission as a specialized support team. The Canadian government offered to replace the RWAU and joined the MFO in April 1986 as the Australian contingent withdrew.

Recently, for financial reasons, the Force was reduced in size. In 1990, the Canadian RWAU returned home, and as a result the Force's helicopters are now provided exclusively by the United States. The table below shows the MFO's total strength as of September 1991; almost half was provided by the United States. There are 16 members in the Civilian Observer Unit (or COU, the successor to the Sinai Field Mission), as well as 33 other MFO civilians.

---

18. This is the conclusion drawn by Richard W. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Kjell Skjelsbaek and Anthony McDermott, eds., *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, NUPI Report, no. 121 (November 1988): 120.
19. Mala Tabory, *The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), 19.

Table 1
MFO Contingents and Personnel

Country	Contingent	Personnel
Canada	Headquarters staff and Air Traffic Control Unit	21
Colombia	Infantry battalion	378
Fiji	Infantry battalion	378
France	Fixed Wing Aviation Unit (1 DHC-6 Twin Otter)	18
Italy	Coastal Patrol Unit	82
Netherlands	Military Police and Signals Units	84
New Zealand	Training Advisory Team	26
Norway	Staff Officers	3
United Kingdom	Headquarters Unit	35
United States	Infantry battalion 1st support battalion (10 UH-1H utility helicopters) Staff officers Civilian Observer Unit	549 419 29 16
Uruguay	Motor Transport Unit and Force Engineer Unit	69
Other MFO Civilians		33
Total		**2,140**

Note: Personnel figures are as of September 1991 (U.S. State Department). Australia withdrew its contingent in 1986. At the same time New Zealand converted its contingent from a RWAU to a training and advisory team. The Canadian RWAU was withdrawn in 1990 and the French contingent was reduced from three aircraft to one in the same year.

Command and Communications

The MFO operates as an independent international organization, with its own headquarters, flag, uniforms, symbol (dove and olive branch), and international auditors (Price Waterhouse). In creating the force, the three parties were beginning from scratch. As a result, they consulted with Brian Urquhart, then UN Undersecretary for Special Political Affairs (peacekeeping), and other UN officials on command, logistics, and operations. Therefore, in several ways the MFO's structure parallels the United Nations system, albeit with significant departures from the UN model and without many of the inherent limitations of the Organization. The position of MFO Director General is the functional equivalent of UN Secretary General, in that the Director General is the highest official to whom the Force reports.

Initially there was an intense battle over civilian control of the force. The Egyptian delegation wanted only a military commander, preferably from a Scandinavian country. Israel wanted Americans as both Director General and Force Commander. The United States wanted to retain control at the political level; the administration had no confidence

that a non-US Director General could perform the role. The final agreement was a compromise. The Director General is always a US citizen, appointed by the United States with the approval of the parties, and is based outside the region. The Force Commander, on the other hand, must not be a US national.

The Director General is appointed for a renewable four-year term. His three principal responsibilities include: negotiating with the contributing nations, maintaining liaison with the host countries, and managing the Force's administrative functions. MFO's first Director General, Mr. Leamon R. Hunt, had been Director of the US Sinai Field Mission between 1977 and 1979. Hunt chose Rome as the Force's civilian headquarters. He was assassinated there by the Red Brigades on February 15, 1984.[20]

The Director General makes decisions autonomously, although naturally he takes into account the interests of the host states and the contributing participants. While this affords him greater latitude, it also isolates him politically. There are no "MFO delegations" he can readily approach to discuss matters. Instead, he must make contact through embassies in Rome. He contacts the Egyptian and Israeli governments directly through intermittent visits to Cairo or Tel Aviv, indirectly through the parties' embassies in Rome or the MFO's resident representatives in Cairo and Tel Aviv, or alternatively during meetings of the three funding governments in Rome.[21] Moreover, his staff of 40 to 50 people are largely American, reinforcing the claim that the MFO is an American endeavor with a multilateral fig leaf.

The Director General appoints the Force Commander (with the approval of the parties). The Commander operates relatively autonomously. Although he must adjust his operations in accordance with budgets originating in Rome, he has complete operational control over the Force and its civilian observers.[22] He is also responsible for reporting any violation of the Treaty's security arrangements to the Director General and to both Israel and Egypt. Through mid-1991, Norway and New Zealand have provided Force Commanders for MFO.[23]

The Treaty and Protocol made provisions for liaison offices headquartered in Tel Aviv and Cairo, respectively. The chief liaison officers of both parties meet with the Force Commander monthly or when an extraordinary meeting is called by either Israel, Egypt, or the Force Commander.

Logistics and Administration

By operating as an independent organization the MFO functions with fewer constraints and greater efficiency than a comparable UN peacekeeping force, principally because its procurement and contracting system is both more flexible and centralized.

---

20. John Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers*, 178–79.
21. Robert B. Houghton and Frank G. Trinka, *Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State Publication, 1984), 47.
22. Tabory, *The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai*, 69.
23. Lieutenant General Fredrick V. Bull-Hansen of Norway was the MFO's first Force Commander. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Egil J. Ingebrigsten also of Norway on March 27, 1984 until March 30, 1989. The current Force Commander is Lieutenant General Donald S. McIver of New Zealand.

First, there is no division between military and civilian administration officers, translating into greater accountability to the Force Commander. As Mackinlay writes:

> By removing the dual civilian/military system, the civilians at El Gorah have been made more accountable to the force they are contracted to sustain. It is less possible for the incompetent or intransigent civil elements of the logistic team system to be shielded by the intervening chief administration officer's office when the 'hire and fire' trigger can be substantially influenced if not operated by the chief logistics officer on the spot.[24]

Second, whereas participating contingents in UN peacekeeping missions are responsible for their own equipment, leaving some of the less developed countries to depend on other nations for equipment and leading to a wide diversity of equipment types within contingents, the MFO has standardized equipment, about 60 percent of which is acquired from civilian vendors and 40 percent from the US Department of Defense. Although tenders are open to international competition, priority is given to vendors of Funds Contributing States (US, Israel and Egypt) followed by the nations that contribute contingents. Budget cuts have necessitated some changes in procurement practices. For example, food procurement from the US Department of Defense was switched from vendors in the United States to vendors in Germany, reducing transport costs. More supplies are also being purchased from Israel and Egypt.[25]

Third, a centralized procurement system facilitates improved inventory tracking and property control among the MFO's four locations (Rome, Tel Aviv, Cairo and Sinai). In 1987, commercial procurement tracking system was implemented that permits all four sites to share a common database.

Field Operations

Seven months elapsed between the signing of the Treaty Protocol that established MFO and the deployment of the Force. First, there was considerable reluctance on the part of countries to contribute troops. Second, much of the MFO's area of operations is undeveloped. The infrastructure to support and house troops, equipment, and supplies had to be constructed or renovated to meet the demands of the Force. North Camp, its headquarters, was built up around existing Israeli airbase facilities at Raffa.[26] In contrast, South Camp near Sharm el Sheikh involved totally new construction.

MFO contingents arrived on site in late February–early March 1982. At that time, Israeli forces had largely withdrawn from Zone C, but some remained to dismantle the airbase at Eilat and other installations, as provided for in the Agreement. There was initial apprehension that Israeli settlers at Yamit, on the Mediterranean near the Gaza Strip, would resist orders to evacuate the area, but Israeli troops removed those settlers resisting the evacuation order in accordance with the terms of the Treaty. By April 25, the date of the Israeli final withdrawal under the Treaty, the Force was fully operational.

---

24. Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers*, 188.
25. MFO *Annual Report*, Rome, April 1990, 9.
26. *The Multinational Force and Observers*, 23.

Since April 1982, the three infantry battalions have been deployed in the six sectors that comprise Zone C, where they staff observation posts and checkpoints. The Fijian contingents are stationed in the two northern sectors, the Colombians in the center, and the Americans in the south. The Fijians and Colombians are based at North Camp, the US at South Camp. Sector headquarters control the observation posts and checkpoints in each sector, and each battalion conducts air, vehicle and foot patrols.

The Italian Coastal Patrol Unit, based at Sharm el Sheikh, patrols the Strait of Tiran and is responsible for guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Straits and the Gulf of Aqaba. The Dutch Contingent provides the Force Military Police Unit and the Force Signals Unit. The latter is responsible for staffing the communication system within the Force's area of operations, in addition to monitoring transmissions from Rome, Cairo, and Tel Aviv. The French contingent currently provides one DHC-6 Twin Otter fixed-wing aircraft, facilitating transportation between the two camps and support for both the Civilian Observer Unit and the Force's administrative staff.

The Observer Unit evolved from the US Sinai Field Mission, which operated an early warning system under the terms of the second Sinai Agreement of 1975. The Field Mission observed the area surrounding the Mitla and Gidi passes to ensure that neither Israeli nor Egyptian forces used these strategic passes to breach the buffer zone. On April 25, 1982, its functions ceased and some of its participants were transferred to MFO. All of the civilian observers are US nationals; roughly half are seconded from the US State Department, the Agency for International Development, and the US Information Agency. Others with appropriate military experience are recruited by the MFO.

The Observer Unit is responsible for verifying the security arrangements in all four zones. Verification missions are conducted semi-monthly, and observers are mandated to carry out additional verification within forty-eight hours upon the request of either Party. The civilian observer is accompanied by a liaison officer of the force being inspected. The customary verification mission lasts for two to four days. Reconnaissance flights are conducted prior to ground inspections. Treaty provisions require clearance for MFO inspection flights by the appropriate national authorities and that MFO aircraft not cross international boundaries without prior notification.[27] Twin-engine Huey helicopters supplied by the United States are used for the majority of aerial inspections.

To date there have been no significant violations of the Treaty's security arrangement. The one major dispute was over the legal status of Taba, 250 acres located 12 miles southwest of Eilat. In December 1981, four months prior to Israel's final withdrawal from the Sinai, the Israeli government questioned the position of the border, placing the status of Taba and other areas along the border into question. Israel did not question the demarcation line in 1949 when it signed the armistice, or following the 1956 war during its withdrawal from the Sinai.[28] Although the Egyptian government maintained that no

---

27. Amy Smithson, "Multilateral Aerial Inspections: An Abbreviated History," in Michael Krepon and Amy E. Smithson, eds., *Open Skies, Arms Control, and Cooperative Security* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 119.
28. William Quandt, *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1988), 100.

construction should take place while the matter was under consideration, the Israeli government issued two leases before April 1982, the date of the final withdrawal. Despite Egyptian complaints, construction was not terminated.

In 1986, both governments signed a *Compromis* in which they referred the territorial disputes to binding arbitration. Pending a ruling by the arbitration panel, the MFO was invited to establish and operate an observation post at Taba, which it did using troops of the US contingent. The panel awarded Taba to Egypt on March 15, 1989. The Taba agreement was signed on September 11, 1989, and thereafter control of the area reverted to the Egyptian government. The resolution of the Taba dispute demonstrated the two parties' willingness to abide by Article 7 of the Treaty and resolve outstanding issues through peaceful means.

Assessment

The MFO has been effective in fulfilling its mission of verifying the implementation of security arrangements provided for in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, principally because Egypt, Israel, and the United States recognize that their interests are reinforced by its continued presence in the Sinai.

Unlike other Middle East peacekeeping forces, the MFO was deployed as part of a peace treaty with a clear mandate. Therefore, from the outset, the MFO has had the full cooperation of Israel and Egypt. Since the signing of the peace treaty, and the Protocol of August 1981, the positions of Cairo and Tel Aviv with respect to maintaining a secure and peaceful border have been unchanged, despite conflict on other Arab-Israeli fronts, particularly in Lebanon and with the PLO. Nor did the assassination of President Sadat alter Egypt's commitment to peace with Israel, creating greater confidence that the Treaty would hold.

The political, financial, and military support of the United States has been indispensable to the success of the MFO. In a region where suspicion and visceral hatreds are often inherited along with a person's family name, the role of a political mediator becomes more imperative in order to bring the parties closer together and provide guarantees. Therefore at the political level, it was principally the patient mediation and pressure exerted by the Carter administration that ultimately produced the peace treaty. At the military level, the US contributes almost half of the total troop strength of the MFO. At the financial level it is directly responsible for one-third of the financial burden. A cynic may even go so far as to say that the financial arrangement merely provides a means of recycling US aid money. While the balance sheets identify the United States, Egypt and Israel as equal contributors, the US is the unambiguous financial sponsor of the MFO through its heavy financial subsidies to Egypt and Israel. Even this argument does not necessarily diminish the legitimacy of the force as a peacekeeper since each of the parties accepts and appears satisfied with the status quo. Indeed, any change in its status may have to wait until there is more progress on other Arab fronts. Failing that, the MFO is likely to remain in the Sinai.

Conclusion

In contrast to the record of the second Multinational Force or the Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon, discussed in the next section, the MFO experience supports the use of non-UN peacekeeping missions in circumstances where a UN force is impractical. Not surprisingly, the Force has relied for its success on factors traditionally recognized as fundamental to the success of UN peacekeeping operations, namely, the non-use of force, a clear mandate, broad political support, cooperation of the parties, appropriate composition, and a unified command structure.[29]

The force derives both advantages and disadvantages from being outside the UN framework. On the debit side, whereas a UN peacekeeping force, by virtue of its affiliation with the Organization, is recognized *a priori* as an impartial force, the MFO had to prove itself neutral and international. Although its composition is not governed by the UN's principle of equitable geographic distribution, a North-South balance has been respected. The inclusion of contingents from developing countries such as Fiji, Colombia, and Uruguay reinforce the MFO's multinational credentials.

On the credit side, the MFO is not subject to UN bureaucracy. The Director General does not have to report to a body analogous to the Security Council or General Assembly. At the logistics level, procurement is not subject to the long lead times common in UN peacekeeping missions. Nor is the MFO subject to the financial pressures of the UN system. Although it has undergone its own financial retrenchment, the MFO continues to function adequately. However, the MFO system is not necessarily transferable to the UN and would not be readily accepted as a model for UN peacekeeping forces. Although the nominal US financial contributions to UN peacekeeping and the MFO are comparable (30 versus 33 percent), the *de facto* US contribution to MFO is much higher. An American national is its political director, and US personnel administer the operation and account for half of its troops. Similar one-party control in a UN force would generally be unacceptable, even if responsibility for different operations were assigned to different powers. The appearance of trusteeship in such operations would be hard to shake.

Finally, the success of the MFO suggests that a non-UN peacekeeping force may be a reliable alternative should a UN force be impractical. At least two conditions must be met for that to be true, however: the consensus of the belligerents must favor the non-UN alternative, and there must be a great power sponsor. The first criterion has been stressed elsewhere in this report, but the second is also essential to the success of a non-UN force. Had the United States not been present to lead the cheering for MFO and to encourage other countries to contribute people or money to the operation, had it not funded the Force, or attached its own prestige to the operation's success, it is unlikely that the MFO would have made it past the planning stage.

---

29. Nelson, "Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations Model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *Multinational Forces in Lebanon*, 80–89.

The Multinational Forces in Lebanon

Since 1958, there have been four peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, two under the auspices of the United Nations (the UN Observer Group in Lebanon [1958] and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon [1978-present]), and two under independent auspices (Multinational Force I and II). The two non-UN missions are treated here. Of the four operations, only the first Multinational Force can claim unqualified success.

This unsatisfactory record is closely linked to the nature of the Lebanese conflict. Its duration and intensity were derived from both internal and external factors. Regional powers such as Syria and Israel intervened on the side of their Lebanese clients, widening the conflict to an Arab-Israeli concern. What was needed before the deployment of a peacekeeping force was a basis for political reconciliation among Lebanon's different communities and a recognition of the country's territorial sovereignty by neighboring states. Short of this, any peacekeeping force would find itself in an impossible situation. It would be caught between militias not yet prepared to accept a political compromise and states ready to resort to force to uphold their national interests.

The first Multinational Force was created in August 1982 to facilitate the withdrawal of Palestinian (and some Syrian) fighters from Beirut following Israel's eight-week military blockade of Beirut. Soon after the Palestinian withdrawal was complete, the Force was withdrawn only to be reconstituted following the massacre of Palestinians at the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila on September 16–18. This time, the Force was not mandated with a specific task as was its predecessor, but had the ambiguous task of establishing an environment to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign forces and the restoration of the Lebanese government's authority.

For the Lebanese Maronites, the deployment of the second Multinational Force (MNF II) promised deliverance. Fouad Ajami writes:

> The United States was to do for them—so they hoped—what France once did. It was a time of great delusions: An American-trained army would hold the country together; the Shia "squatters" in the southern suburbs of Beirut were to be cleared out; the clannish Druze in the Shouf Mountains southeast of Beirut were to be defeated. A new order would be created.[30]

Had the delusions stopped there, the record of the second MNF may have been different. As it was, the US administration seemed to share the Lebanese Maronites' perception of its transforming powers. On the level of stated objectives, MNF II was deployed as a peacekeeping force with its implications of impartiality and non-offensive nature; but on the level of fundamental intent, MNF II was to facilitate the establishment of a "new order." It could not perform both functions simultaneously; they were incompatible.

---

30. Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 205.

During the first months of its deployment, MNF II managed to distance itself from Lebanon's sectarian fighting, but the efforts of some of its members to reconstitute the authority of the Lebanese army and their support of the Lebanese government (which had effectively lost all recognizable authority over the country) stripped them of protective neutrality and subjected them to the lawless nature of Lebanon's sectarian fighting, but with a exclusive handicap—a strict set of rules governing the use of force. The combination proved deadly for the US and French contingents of MNF II.

Lebanon: Crossroads and Battleground

A thorough examination of the historical, economic, and socio-political determinants of Lebanon's civil wars (1860, 1958, and 1975–1976) is beyond the scope of this study. A brief discussion of the nature of the conflict will help to place the deployment of UN and non-UN forces in political context.[31]

Lebanon is a small country bordered by Syria to the east and north, Israel to the south, and the Mediterranean to the west. From west to east its topography is one of alternating lowlands and highlands. The coastal plateau is flanked by the Lebanon Mountains, also called Mount Lebanon. The eastern-most mountain range is the Anti-Lebanon. Running between the two ranges is the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon's principal agricultural area.

The state of Lebanon was created only after World War I, when France was entrusted with the mandate for the area under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. In 1920, France expanded the territory of Mount Lebanon, which was dominated by the Druzes and Maronites, to include the coastal cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, the Bekaa Valley, Jebal Amal in the south, and the Akkar plain in the north. In yielding to the request of their Christian co-religionists and creating *Grand Liban* (Greater Lebanon), the French transformed Lebanon's demographics and its identity.

After 1920, the population of the territory changed from predominantly Christian (Maronite) and Druze to one where no single community formed a majority. According to the 1921 census, which was partially boycotted by Muslims, the population of Greater Lebanon was 608,000, of which Christians numbered 428,000, or about 70 percent of the total population. The more accurate 1932 census, the last official census taken, indicated a changing balance between the Christian and Muslim population.[32] The Christians comprised only 51 percent of the population. Of the three main religious sects, Maronites

---

31. The literature on Lebanon is abundant, and much of it excellent. Particular attention should be given to Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988); Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946); Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985); David Gilmour, *A Fractured Country* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983); Itmar Rabinovitch, *The War for Lebanon: 1970-1985* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985); Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Affairs, Harvard, 1979); and two contributions from journalists, Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989) and Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* (New York: Atheneum, 1990).

32. Successive Lebanese governments have published only unofficial population figures, fearing that formal recognition of the new numbers would strengthen demands for the redistribution of political power and development planning in line with demographic changes.

comprised 29 percent, Sunni Muslims about 23 percent, and Shia Muslims 20 percent. Rough demographic estimates have established the present (1991) Christian-Muslim ratio at 40:60, with the Shia constituting about 30 percent of the total population.

The expanded territory of Mount Lebanon also brought into question the Lebanese identity. The Maronites perceived themselves as the custodians of a Christian Lebanon with a decidedly Western orientation. Lebanese Muslims, in contrast, found greater affinity with the Arab heartland. The Sunni population of Tripoli, Beirut, and Sidon, for example, was heir to the political culture of the Ottoman Empire, and that inheritance included a different attitude not only toward the relationship of Lebanon with the outside world, but also towards the relationship of spiritual and temporal, government and society, leaders and masses.[33] Kamal Salibi eloquently describes this conflict between "Arabism" and "Lebanism."

> In Lebanon, from the very beginning, a force called Arabism, acting from outside and inside the country, stood face to face with another exclusively parochial social force called Lebanism; and the two forces collided on every fundamental issue, impeding the normal development of the state and keeping its political legitimacy and ultimate viability continuously in question.[34]

It should not be altogether surprising that the conservative Maronites, as the claimants to Lebanese political power, would resist forfeiting their privileged position and abandoning their vision of Lebanon, or that the Muslims would accept the position of inferiority which that role implied. Two conditions were necessary to govern these two incompatible parochial forces of Lebanism and Arabism: a political consensus among the different communities, and balanced socio-economic development. These two conditions failed to materialize.

The Maronites did not accept their Muslim compatriots as political equals and with a jealous watchfulness were skeptical of their motives. The Maronites argued that the Muslims were susceptible to the divisive appeals of Arab nationalist leaders and as such could not be trusted with sensitive political and administrative positions. Political formulas reinforced sectarianism. For example, the unwritten National Pact of 1943 reserved the presidency for a Christian, assigned a Sunni Muslim as prime minister and a Shia Muslim as speaker of parliament, and set the ratio of Christian and Muslim deputies in parliament at six to five.

Economic development favored Christian-dominated areas over others. Of the four major communities (Maronite, Druze, Sunni, and Shia), the Shia were the most economically deprived. While the alliance between the Sunni urban notables and the Maronite elite guaranteed the development of the Sunni coastal towns of Tripoli, Sidon, and Tyre, the political marginalization of the Shia left the south underdeveloped. After the 1970s, and particularly under the tutelage of Imam Musa al Sadr, the Shia community became

---

33. Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press), 147.
34. Salibi, *House of Many Mansions*, 37.

politicized and was prepared to press its claim to a share of the government's political and economic power commensurate with its numbers.

As Hourani writes: "For Lebanon to maintain its separate existence, there had to be some kind of authority which, whatever its origins, stood above the interests of particular communities; an agreement on the sharing of power between them; and some measure of agreement also on the purposes for which that power should be used, in particular in relation to the surrounding states."[35] Only recently, with the acceptance of the Ta'if accord in October 1989, has such an arrangement been accepted. The accord was mediated by an Arab League Tripartite Committee consisting of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, and King Hassan II of Morocco. The document recognized Lebanon as an independent country with an Arab identity. It set forth a political reform program, not dissimilar from past formulas such as the 1943 National Pact and the 1976 Reform Document promoted by Syria. Although the agreement anticipated the end of political arrangements based on sectarian affiliation, it implicitly accepted confessional politics, with membership in the Lebanese parliament distributed equally between Christians and Muslims.[36]

After more than 15 years of war, there are indications that Lebanon's communities have accepted the need for compromise and political consensus as an undeniable fact. The Ta'if document is the first step in the incipient development of the country's national identity and the restoration of its sovereignty and independence.

Origins of the Multinational Forces

The second electoral victory of the Likud Party in Israel in 1981, and the appointment of the acerbic and ambitious Ariel Sharon as Defense Minister, transformed both the style and substance of Israeli foreign policy. No longer was the proposal to collude with the Christian Maronites and restore the status quo in Lebanon considered a "vain fantasy." There was a new mood of confidence. The influence of more cautious men such as Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman was eclipsed by the kind of determination found in men compelled by a moral mission, such as Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Sharon.[37]

On June 6, 1982, the Israeli government launched Operation Peace for Galilee to destroy the PLO in Lebanon. A statement issued by the Israeli Cabinet on the day of the invasion defended the operation as essential to the security of Israel's northern border. The Cabinet also expressed its intent to sign a peace treaty with the Lebanese government.[38] But, the Israeli cabinet was not privy to the expanded goals of its Defense Minister. The operation, originally designed to stop at the 40-kilometer mark (about as

---

35. Albert Hourani, "Ideologies of the Mountain and the City," in Roger Owen, ed., *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 23.
36. The Ta'if agreement gives Christians and Muslims each 54 seats in the Lebanese Parliament. The Maronite community is allocated 30 seats, the Sunni, 22, the Shia, 22, and the Druze, 8. The balance is distributed among the remaining Christian communities and the Alawi.
37. For a discussion on the differences between Begin's first and second government see Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 38–39.
38. Itmar Rabinovitch, *The War for Lebanon*, 121–22.

far north as Sidon), pushed northward to Beirut, encircling the PLO. At this point the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) action had long since overreached its official mission of creating a security zone in the south and instead became interpreted by all sides as a war of liberation. For Israeli Prime Minister Begin and Defence Minister Sharon it was more than simply a war for Galilee, it was a war for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For Lebanon's Christian Maronites, the routing of the Palestinians would clear the way for the restoration of Christian hegemony. For the Palestinians, it was the confrontation they had been anticipating. They understood that not only their physical presence in Lebanon but also their very political survival was at stake.

MNF I

The UN Security Council met on June 6, 1982, and unanimously adopted Resolution 509 demanding the complete and immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon. The IDF, disregarding the Security Council's orders, quickly moved northward. By June 7, it had reached positions north of the UNIFIL area of deployment, and by June 25 it encircled Beirut and controlled the Damascus road.

On June 26, the US vetoed a draft resolution proposed by France that called for UN observers to supervise an Israeli withdrawal and the evacuation of PLO forces on the grounds that the plan permitted the PLO to retain their weapons while regrouping.[39]

At the beginning of July, President Reagan's Middle East Envoy Philip Habib sent a cable to Washington recommending that the US administration deploy troops in Lebanon as part of a multinational force. The suggestion provoked an internal policy debate within the administration. While Habib encouraged the President to deploy troops in Beirut, General John Vessey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger questioned the wisdom of placing US forces in such a position.

All discussion on the deployment of a multinational force was academic in the absence of an evacuation agreement involving all parties. US Special Envoy Habib would have to synthesize a formula that could accommodate the competing interests and sensibilities of those involved. First, the Maronites objected to any proposal that included a partial IDF withdrawal from Beirut, fearing that the PLO would remain in the capital. They also were concerned that the departing fighters would hand their weapons to their Lebanese Muslim allies. Second, Israel rejected wholesale any proposal that fell short of a complete PLO withdrawal from Beirut. Third, while the PLO had been defeated militarily, Arafat defined the struggle in the pan-Arabist context, and Lebanese Muslim leaders would not condone the emasculation of the Palestinian resistance movement. While many West Beirutis blamed the destruction of the capital on the PLO, they were not prepared to callously hand Arafat over to the Israelis and sacrifice Arab dignity.[40] Also, Arafat insisted that any evacuation of PLO fighters should be accompanied by US guarantees for

---

39. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 123.
40. Kamal Salibi recollects his thoughts as Walid Jumblatt received Yasser Arafat immediately prior to the PLO Chairman's departure from Beirut. As quoted in Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 153.

the safety of the Palestinians remaining in Lebanon, and that the deployment of the MNF should coincide with the withdrawal of Palestinian fighters.

UN observers detailed with UNIFIL were deployed to Beirut under Security Council Resolution 516 (August 1, 1982) to monitor the situation in and around the capital. They were stopped *en route* by the Israeli army and not allowed to proceed past Khalde Junction south of Beirut. The official Israeli position was that "UN observers could in no feasible and practical way monitor the activities of the terrorist organizations in Beirut and its environment. The presence of such observers in Beirut would signal to the terrorist organizations that they are under no obligation to leave Beirut and Lebanon."[41] By this action, the Israeli government made clear its preference for a third-party peacekeeping force, and not the UN, to supervise the evacuation of Palestinian and Syrian fighters.

The Israeli siege of Beirut from July through August pressured all the parties to reach a disengagement accord. On August 11, the Israeli Cabinet approved "in principle" the evacuation plan proposed by Habib. The Israelis demonstrated some flexibility when they waived the demand for a list of names of the evacuating fighters and conceded to an early deployment of French forces. The US arranged for Tunisia to accept Yasser Arafat, and eight Arab states offered to accept PLO fighters. On August 19, the government of Lebanon formally submitted written requests for the deployment of a multinational "disengagement" force. The following day the Lebanese government accepted offers from France, the United States, and Italy to participate in a multinational force to supervise the withdrawal of over 8,000 Palestinian and 550 Syrian fighters from Beirut. By August 31, the evacuation was completed.

According to Rashid Khalidi, the "US had succeeded in confining the definition of the conflict, and the negotiations to end it, to the technical question of a PLO withdrawal from Beirut. This was seen in Washington as virtually the sole task of the MNF, and once this evacuation had taken place, the US troops were immediately removed."[42] By September 10, the US Marines pulled out from Beirut, two weeks earlier than had been originally planned.

MNF II

The political-military situation in Lebanon deteriorated markedly following the assassination of president-elect Bashir Gemayel on September 14, 1982. As the scion of Pierre Gemayel, Bashir inherited a political legacy as much as a name. Unlike his elder brother, Amin, he appeared to possess the strength of a political warrior. He brought to Christian Lebanese politics a sense of rebirth, so that when he was killed many Christian Lebanese felt that they were violated, felt the need for retribution, and expressed it in raw violence. It was as if for several hours the guilt of an entire nation was placed on the Palestinians of Sabra and Shatila. In these two Palestinian refugee camps on the outskirts of Beirut, 800–1,000 men, women, and children were killed by Christian Phalange

41. United Nations Document, S/15345 Add. 1, August 5, 1982, 45.
42. Rashid Khalidi, *PLO Decision-making During the 1982 War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 175.

militiamen on September 16–17. IDF soldiers stood stoically outside, having been informed by the Israeli general staff not to enter the refugee camps.[43]

The massacres evoked a universal sense of horror. There was some discussion of a UN peacekeeping force for Beirut. On September 19, the Security Council adopted Resolution 521 authorizing the Secretary General to increase the number of UNTSO observers in Beirut to 50 and requesting him to approach the government of Lebanon with the possibility of deploying a UN force in Beirut. While Israel cooperated with the UNTSO observers, it opposed any transfer of UN troops from UNIFIL to Beirut. The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab states preferred to deploy UN troops, but Israel pressed for the reconstitution of the MNF. The government of Lebanon also preferred a non-UN third party force and requested that France, the United States, and Italy redeploy their troops.

In US decision-making circles there were intimations that had the original MNF stayed in place and not withdrawn from Beirut in the first half of September, the massacres might have been prevented. The tragic proportions of the killings and the accompanying sense of moral obligation convinced the Reagan administration to redeploy US Marines in Beirut. A sense of moral purpose has been a constant in American foreign policy and as Geoffrey Kemp states, there was little discussion or argument among the President and his advisors. It was an emotional reaction more than one with more carefully planned objectives determined strictly by political interests. The administration felt responsible for the Palestinians' security in Lebanon, and if the Israelis would fail to ensure their safety, then the MNF would provide it.[44]

On September 20, the United States, France, and Italy announced the redeployment of their troops in Beirut. The arrangement was codified by an exchange of letters between the government of Lebanon and each of the three troop contributing countries.

Political Support

According to *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman, PLO Chairman Arafat first suggested a multinational force comprised of American, French, and Italian troops to supervise the Palestinian evacuation from Beirut. "He [Arafat] understood that an American umbrella covering the PLO's withdrawal was the best insurance against Israel breaking its promise not to invade West Beirut just as the PLO was letting down its guard to leave."[45]

---

43. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 160. In Order Number 6, the Israeli army general staff stated that "refugee camps [Sabra and Shatila] are not to be entered. Searching and mopping up the camps will be done by the Phalangists and the Lebanese."
44. Geoffrey Kemp, "The American Peacekeeping Role in Lebanon," Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 165. This has also been supported by a senior member of the US Embassy in Beirut who said "the marines were sent back to Beirut because we felt guilty about what happened in the camps. We couldn't say that, of course. So at the time that we decided to send them back, Washington developed a rationale for their presence." Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 191.
45. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 190.

While there was some initial discussion of the expansion of UNIFIL in order to establish a presence in Beirut, Israel's coolness to the suggestion of a UN force prompted the consideration of alternatives. The United States supported the deployment of a third-party force in Lebanon. The National Security Council staff recommended an initiative which could force a withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces from Lebanon and press Lebanese President Amin Gemayel to institute political reforms. The introduction of US ground forces was implicit in this proposal. Some, both in Congress and the Pentagon, expressed reservations vis-à-vis contributing US troops and preferred instead to press for a quick Israeli withdrawal. Congressional reservations were based more on the emotive claim that US forces should not be deployed in others' wars than on misgivings about the MNF's ability to maintain a non-combat role. The Soviet Union also objected to the presence of American troops in Lebanon.[46]

As the siege of Beirut lasted into August, several Arab states reversed their position on accepting the Palestinian evacuees, removing one of the principal obstacles to the withdrawal.

Following the massacres at Sabra and Shatila there were two options—the redeployment of the MNF in Beirut or a UN peacekeeping operation. The Lebanese government and Israel both preferred the MNF, as noted. The US administration could have exerted greater pressure on both these parties had it liked the idea of another UN peacekeeping force for Lebanon, but the Reagan administration was more inclined to action independent of the United Nations. Lebanese opposition groups supported the return of the MNF on humanitarian grounds and as a counterweight to the Phalange.[47]

Mandate

The first Multinational Force was assigned two missions: to provide "appropriate assistance" to the Lebanese Armed Forces in supervising the evacuation of Palestinian and Syrian fighters from Beirut, and to ensure the security and physical safety of Palestinian non-combatants remaining in Beirut. In the exchange of notes between the government of Lebanon and the United States, Washington pledged to provide "guarantees on the basis of assurances received from the government of Israel and from the leaders of certain Lebanese groups with which it has been in contact."[48] While there was a vague reference to the Force's obligation to assist the Lebanese government restore the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty, its mandate essentially related to the evacuation of PLO and Syrian fighters from Beirut.

The mandate specified a maximum deployment of 30 days, to be followed by withdrawal. However, here again the US administration was divided. Philip Habib felt

---

46. For a more detailed discussion of the principal positions held by the NSC, the Departments of State and Defense, see Kemp, "The American Peacekeeping Role in Lebanon," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 167–68.
47. Nathan A. Pelcovits, "The Multinational Force in Beirut: What went wrong?" in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 19.
48. David C. Martin and John Walcott, *Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story of America's War Against Terrorism* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), 94.

the US guarantee of the Palestinians' security required a longer MNF presence; General Vessey and Defense Secretary Weinberger disagreed. The policy debate became relevant when assessing the responsibility of the United States with respect to the massacres. Weinberger denied any connection, while Habib believed the continued presence of the Italian contingent in the area would have deterred or prevented Phalange militiamen from entering the camps.[49]

The second MNF's mandate described it as an interposition force charged with assisting the Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to assure the safety of persons and bring an end to the violence in Beruit and its environs and with facilitating the restoration of the legitimate authority of the Lebanese government.[50] The LAF was officially the guarantor of the MNF's security. The Lebanese government ensured the three MNF participants that armed factions would refrain from engaging the MNF in hostile actions or interfering in the Force's activities.

Despite the fact that the environment in which the MNF operated was radically altered after several months of deployment, the mandate was not reinterpreted to take account of the increased violence in Beirut. According to John Mackinlay, when the country was in a state of civil war, the mission that the MNF restore the Lebanese government's sovereignty should have been rescinded.[51]

Funding

The respective troop contributors paid their own costs of operation and supplied their own equipment and logistical support.

Planning and Implementation

The total strength of MNF I was 2,285, of which France contributed about 860, the United States 850, and Italy 575.

The second Multinational Force comprised the original three participants and a small contingent from Great Britain. With the exception of Great Britain, no other country was responsive to US calls for participants. Among the countries approached were Austria, Belgium, Greece, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.[52] This ambivalent response suggests that potential troop-contributing countries were skeptical about the MNF's mission and the level of risk involved, and perhaps skeptical as well about its non-combat role.

On September 24, the first French contingent arrived, followed by the Italians on September 25, and 1,200 US Marines on September 29. The initial troop strength stood at 3,500. Great Britain announced its intentions to send a small contingent in December

---

49. Ibid., 92–98.
50. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 128.
51. Mackinlay, *The Peacekeepers*, 96.
52. Nelson, "Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 151.

1982. The 80-man unit arrived in February 1983 and was later enlarged to about 120. By the summer of 1983, MNF II had reached its peak troop strength of 5,400.

Command Structure, Logistics and Administration

Each of the national contingents retained unilateral control over operation and logistics. There was no overall command structure but a Liaison and Coordination Committee (LCC), comprised of representatives of the contributing forces and chaired by representatives of the Lebanese government, was established to facilitate communication between the national contingents and the government. The LCC in turn consisted of two groups: a supervisory liaison group including the ambassadors of the contributing countries and senior Lebanese government officials, up to the president; and a military and technical liaison group comprised of the military commanders of the MNF contingents and Lebanese Armed Forces representatives.[53] As Ghassan Tueni wrote, "the hazards of presidential chairmanship were many, both political and military. Representation of contributing countries at ambassadorial as well as command level diluted the military character of leadership and staff decisions."[54]

The MNF unit commanders met regularly to exchange information and formulate combined policies, coordinating with their respective ambassadors and the Lebanese government, and liaison was facilitated by the LCC. While these liaison networks may have been adequate for the first deployment, they were incapable of supporting a unified strategy or coordinated operations in MNF II. Richard Nelson offers the view that the second MNF could be justifiably described as four multi-national forces and not one, with four corresponding national policies.[55]

National hubris always finds its way into multilateral peacekeeping forces. The French had no wish to find themselves dominated by the US; and similarly, the Americans had no intention of being under the authority of the French. In contrast, the Italians favored a more unified command structure. Also, the choice of headquarters at the presidential palace at Baabda reinforced the perception that the MNF II was not an impartial force, but one closely associated with the interests of the government.

Field Operations: MNF I

On August 21, 350 of the total French contingent of 860 arrived in the Beirut port area, detached (ironically enough) from duty with UNIFIL. The French troops immediately assumed their responsibility of escorting Palestinian fighters from the Port of Beirut. Over the next three days the French supervised the evacuation of about 2,500 Palestinian fighters. Several days later, the contingent shifted operations from the port area to positions along the Beirut-Damascus highway to supervise the withdrawal of fighters by land. The US and Italian contingents arrived on August 25 and August 26, respectively.

---

53. Ibid., 153-54.
54. Ghassan Tueni, "The MNF in Lebanon: A Tragic Experiment in the Diplomacy of Misunderstandings," Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 228.
55. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 154.

When the US contingents arrived, they assumed positions at the port area. Italian contingents operated along the Green Line, dividing East and West Beirut.

While the US Marines supervised the evacuation by sea, the Italians directed the withdrawal by land.[56] All offensive weapons remained offshore so as not to jeopardize the evacuation agreement. Destroyers and a carrier battle group remained within striking range but not within visible sight. Under the evacuation agreement the fighters were permitted to carry light personal arms (AK-47s, rifles, and pistols) but not heavy weapons.

The safe departure of PLO Chairman Arafat to Tunis on August 30 met one of the principal objectives of the United States. Not only was there the possibility for dissident Palestinian groups to assassinate him, but also for the PLO leadership to challenge US support of Israel. As a result, security at the port was reinforced, and Marines were assigned to protect Arafat.

Between August 21 and September 1, 14,398 Palestinian and Syrian fighters and their dependents (664 were women and children) were evacuated from Beirut. Of these, 6,254 Palestinian and Syrian fighters (including 3,613 soldiers of the Arab Deterrent Force) were evacuated by land across the Beirut-Damascus Highway and 8,144 exited by sea.[57]

Once the PLO evacuation from Beirut was complete on August 31, the MNF prepared to pull back. By September 10, the three Western contingents had withdrawn from Beirut.

Field Operations: MNF II

The deployment of the second MNF can be divided into three phases: from September 1982 to March 1983, when the MNF was tacitly accepted as an impartial force by the local parties; from March through October 1983, a period of growing local perception of the MNF as an instrument of *Pax Americana*; and from November 1983 until withdrawal.

September 1982–March 1983. The French infantry units were deployed at the port and in downtown Muslim West Beirut. Italian contingents assumed control of central Beirut, including the Palestinian refugee camps at Sabra and Shatila. The British were assigned to the area east of Beirut airport. Colonel Mead, commander of the US 32nd Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU), preferred a beachfront site that would support an amphibious landing at Beirut International Airport. The US area extended from the airport to the presidential residence. Initially, Mead requested that the area secured by the US should include high ground, a few kilometers to the east (the Souq el Gharb area of the Shouf Mountains), but he was denied that expanded perimeter in light of Druze-Lebanese Forces confrontations in the Shouf.

The actions of the US component of the Multinational Force were governed by peacetime rules of engagement. Use of force was permitted only in situations of self-defense against a hostile threat, in response to a hostile act, or in defense of LAF elements

---

56. Eric Hammel, *The Root* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 26.
57. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 126.

operating with the Marines. US troops were even directed to consult senior authorities prior to the use of force in self-defense, except in emergency situations. Where non-LAF forces infiltrated the Marines' perimeters, they would be informed that they were in an unauthorized area and would not be permitted to proceed. If this failed to produce the desired response, the matter would be referred to the contingent Commander. The use of force was sanctioned only if the infiltrator committed a hostile act.[58]

From December 1982, the Marines began to train and equip the Christian-dominated LAF, in the context of "restoring the legitimate authority of the government of Lebanon." The Lebanese soldiers received USMC-style camouflage uniforms at the end of their training session. When the 32nd MAU was replaced on December 24 by the 22nd MAU, the training exercises continued and were supplemented with a regular program of joint USMC-LAF patrols.

Thus, from the perspective of other political groups in Lebanon, the MNF was clearly identified with the Christian side in the civil war. It was in the following critical period when some Lebanese began to view the MNF as another occupying force, while for others it symbolized frustrated expectations.[59]

March 1983–October 1983. In March 1983, the urban Muslim militias began to target the MNF as part of their efforts to deal with the Phalange. On March 15, an Italian squad hit a mine field and took sniper fire: one soldier died and two were wounded. The next day, a grenade was dropped on a Marine fire team in West Beirut, injuring five Marines. A day later, all US troops were directed to carry loaded rifles, in contrast to one-per-patrol as previously instructed.

In successive months, increasing violence was directed at the MNF troops. On April 18, 1983, the US Embassy was bombed, killing, among others, four Marine guards. The pro-Iranian Islamic Jihad Organization claimed responsibility for the attack.

In May, the US believed that it had opened the way for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, mediated by US Secretary of State George Shultz. The May 17, 1983 Agreement signed by the Israeli and Lebanese governments formally terminated the state of war between the two countries.[60] The accord permitted Israel to maintain a security zone south of the Awali River and contiguous with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Israel agreed to withdraw from Lebanon within eight to twelve weeks, but a secret agreement between Tel Aviv and Washington made an Israeli withdrawal contingent on the pullback of Syrian forces from Lebanon. Syrian President Hafez Assad rejected the Lebanese-Israeli withdrawal agreement, claiming it "undermines Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, subjugates Lebanon to Israeli and imperialist dominance, and constitutes

---

58. US Department of Defense, *Report of the Department of Defense Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983* (Washington, D.C., December 20, 1983).
59. Tueni, "The MNF in Lebanon," Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 229.
60. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 131.

a grave danger to Syria's security."[61] The May 17 Agreement was to prove that, in the absence of Syria's support, a Lebanese peace agreement would ultimately fail.

On August 10, more than two dozen rocket strikes were directed at Beirut International Airport. Robert McFarlane, President Reagan's special envoy, intervened following the shelling incidents. He suspended all US contacts with Walid Jumblatt's Druze militia, which opposed Gemayel's Phalange and government. The move reinforced the suspicion that US Marines were in Beirut to support the Gemayel government. Although McFarlane later reversed the decision, his actions alienated the Druze and pushed them toward Syria.

On September 4, the IDF pulled back its main forces to the Awali River, creating a vacuum that the local militias moved to fill. The Druze occupied almost all the territory in the Shouf Mountains with the exception of a small village, Souq el-Gharb, which was controlled by the Phalange. The Druze, abetted by their Shia Amal allies, Syrian advisors, Syrian-supported Palestinians, and some Iranians, engaged the Phalange for control of the Shouf. MNF units also came under attack as allies of the Phalange, and returned artillery fire. As Daniel Bolger observes:

> The IDF pullout required America to choose between truly neutral interposition and direct support for Gemayel's government. Having already tilted toward Gemayel, the US found its hand forced by the aggressive Shi[a] Amal and Druze. Every time the Marines shot back, they identified themselves as Lebanese army allies. But rather than admit the changed circumstances, commanders from Washington down to Colonel Geraghty insisted that the marines' mission was unaltered.[62]

US Special Envoy Robert McFarlane attached great significance to Souq el Gharb. He saw it as pivotal to the restoration of the Lebanese government's authority. He advised direct support of the LAF. McFarlane's recommendations were supported by Secretary of State George Shultz but opposed by Defense Secretary Weinberger. On September 12, President Reagan authorized US forces to assist and defend LAF positions over the objections of the Marine Force Commander (Geraghty) in Beirut, who warned that retaliation would be directed at the Marines onshore; ex-Marine McFarlane ordered naval ships to fire in support of the Phalange. On September 16, the cruiser USS *Virginia* and destroyer USS *John Rogers* fired at Druze bases.

On October 23, 1983, Geraghty's warnings proved prescient as a suicide car bomber drove a truck loaded with 12,000 pounds of explosives into the US Marine barracks, killing 241 Marines and wounding over 100 others. The French MNF barracks were simultaneously bombed, resulting in 58 deaths. The Free Islamic Movement claimed responsibility for both bombings.

November 1983–Withdrawal. It had become clear that the MNF's mission as a peacekeeping force had lost all relevance. The American and French contingents in

---

61. As quoted in Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 482.
62. Daniel P. Bolger, *Americans at War: 1975-1986, An Era of Violent Peace* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1988), 218.

particular had compromised their neutrality and had unwillingly become combatants. Although French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson declared in December 1983 that the MNF would not "abandon the Lebanese," only two months later, on February 7, President Reagan announced the redeployment of Marines from Beirut to ships offshore.[63] On March 23, 1984, French President Mitterand announced the imminent withdrawal of French troops after the UN Security Council failed to adopt a French-proposed draft resolution calling for the establishment of a peacekeeping force as a surrogate for the MNF. A week later, President Reagan terminated the deployment of US Marines in Beirut.

Assessment and Conclusions

MNF I was deployed during the Israeli siege of West Beirut with the clear and exclusive mandate to assist the Lebanese Army in supervising the withdrawal of Palestinian and Syrian fighters. There was little room for imaginative interpretation. Furthermore, MNF I had broad political support. Even though the Soviet Union expressed objection to a multinational force, Moscow tacitly recognized the imperative of the Palestinians' departure from Beirut. The Syrians, similarly, were concerned with the safety of the PLO.

The first MNF was deployed after an agreement was reached among the local parties. There was an uncommon consensus among the Lebanese, the Syrians, the PLO, and the Israelis that the Palestinian and Syrian fighters should withdraw from Beirut. After that it was up to the military commanders to plan the specific modalities of the evacuation. Once the mission was accomplished, the immediate rationale for the MNF disappeared. There were no dillusions about the United States' ability to impose a "new order" and there were no actions taken to suggest partiality. For these reasons, the first MNF succeeded where its sequel failed. While some contend that the massacres at Sabra and Shatila would have been avoided had the US Marines stayed in Beirut and fulfilled the Reagan administration's pledge to ensure the safety of remaining Palestinians, the MNF was never obligated to restore public order. The massacres, as with all the bloodletting in Lebanon, grew out of the visceral hatreds governing the warring communities.[64]

Clarity of purpose and political consensus were absent in the deployment of the second MNF. There was no collective definition of purpose beyond a vague notion of "presence" open to varying interpretations. As each of the contingents pursued its own definition of "presence," the US and the French found theirs to be least compatible with the political facts of life in the country.

Indeed, many of the problems encountered by the second MNF came from the apparent misreading by Washington and Paris of internal Lebanese politics. The actions of the French and Americans showed partiality for the Gemayel government. In contrast, the Italians were committed to ensuring the physical safety and security of the Palestinians. Their actions were always directed to this goal and did not change with time. It was

---

63. Nelson, "Multinational peacekeeping in the Middle East and the United Nations model," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 135.
64. For an elegant description of this see the chapter entitled "The Demoralization of Public Life," in Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 238–60.

principally this difference that protected the Italian forces from the kind of recrimination directed at their Western partners.

US Training of Lebanese Forces

A few months after the US Marines began training the Lebanese Armed Forces, and a few weeks after the start of joint USMC-Lebanese Army patrols, confrontations with the militias escalated from self-defense to active engagement. In September 1983, the French expressed privately their concerns that the United States' actions would identify the MNF too closely with the Christian Phalange. By then, however, the MNF had been transformed in function from peacekeeping to enforcement.

In order to make sense of Lebanon and to justify the American presence there, the Reagan administration made Lebanon an extension of what it knew—and what it knew was American political culture, patriotism, and devotion to the concept of one nation under God. Therefore when the young, Kennedyesque Lebanese President, Amin Gemayel, came to the Americans soon after they arrived and asked them to go beyond their symbolic "presence" role and assume primary responsibility for training and equipping the Lebanese army—which was under the direct authority of Gemayel and his Maronite commander-in-chief Ibrahim Tannous—so that it might one day reoccupy the whole of Lebanese territory, the Reagan administration said yes.[65]

In training and equipping the Lebanese Armed Forces, the United States was not simply supporting the kind of Lebanon with which it shared the greatest affinity—a Christian Lebanon. The United States was attempting to preclude the kind of Lebanon which it either misunderstood (a Muslim Lebanon) or feared (a Syrian-dominated Lebanon). In siding with the status quo, the US set itself against the largest community in Lebanon. In contrast to their position in 1958, the Shia were prepared this time to press their claims to political power by force. The "new order" that Bashir Gemayel had so confidently proclaimed was actually a variant of the old, discredited order. Politics in Lebanon had become so distorted and vulgarized that the political institutions—the presidency and parliamentary system—that the US Marines were mandated to restore were the last physical remnants of a decaying civil society. What was needed apart from a strong Lebanese national army was a new political consensus. Had the White House fully understood this, it may have also appreciated the implications of training the Lebanese Army, dressing its Lebanese graduates in Marine-like uniforms, and conducting joint patrols.

The May 17 Agreement

The perception of the urban Muslim militias that the US had become the Maronites' benefactor was reinforced by political developments, particularly the US-mediated May 17, 1983 Agreement between Israel and Lebanon (later unilaterally abrogated by Amin Gemayel under Syrian pressure in March 1984). The Israelis had insisted that the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon was contingent on a treaty with the Lebanese

---

65. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 193.

government, and a Lebanese-Israeli "peace treaty" fit in with overall US policy in the Middle East. Moreover, if the security of Israel's northern border could be assured, and the pro-Western government of Amin Gemayel supported, Syrian and Soviet influence in the region would be contained.

But, the May 17 Agreement alienated the Syrians and Lebanese opposition factions. Assad had not been consulted on the terms of the Israeli-Lebanese withdrawal agreement, and he was not about to abide by the terms of the document.

Souq el-Gharb

The military development that irreversibly changed the MNF from a peacekeeping to a combatant force was the battle for control of Souq el-Gharb in September 1983. When Robert McFarlane ordered naval ships to fire in support of the Lebanese Army against the advice of US military leaders, he allied the Marines of MNF with the Phalange militia.

Only eight Lebanese soldiers were killed and twelve wounded in the Druze-Maronite confrontation over Souq el-Gharb. The incident was used by the Gemayel government to make the Phalange's fight a US one as well. That was ultimate intent of the Maronites all along, who perceived the MNF as their Trojan Horse against their Muslim compatriots.[66]

As Richard Nelson concludes:

> The shelling of Souq el Gharb was the result of a political, not a military decision. The self-defense argument is transparent. Moreover, the shelling was inconsistent with the MNF's mandate. The MNF was to assist the LAF by its neutral interpositioning presence, not by bombardment. Earlier entanglements with one party in the Lebanese conflict—that which held nominal title to the government—may have led the way towards the end of the peacekeeping mission, but it was the shelling that pushed the mission over the edge.[67]

Ultimately, a peacekeeping force provides the luxury of time for diplomacy to draw together parties of different political persuasions. In the case of Lebanon, political reform and ultimate national reconciliation requires the tacit approval of Syria and a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem as much as to domestic issues. Therefore, a formula such as adopted in the May 17 Agreement could not work. Also, using the terminology of conflict resolution theory, Lebanon was not "ripe for resolution." In 1982–84, there was little talk of compromise. The Lebanese parties had not yet reached the point where they would be willing to accept political reforms along the lines of the National Reconciliation Document of the 1989 Ta'if Accord. The Palestinians left Beirut as though victorious, but they understood they were entering a political wasteland. From a position of weakness they could neither renounce terrorism nor embrace UN Resolutions 242 and 338. For their part, Begin and Sharon sought total victory over the PLO and failed. They had not entered

---

66. Ibid., 201.
67. Richard Nelson, "The Multinational Force in Lebanon," in Skjelsbaek and McDermott, eds., *The Multinational Force in Lebanon*, 163.

Lebanon in force merely to strike bargains. MNF II deployed into a political situation that was becoming increasingly polarized. Under such circumstances, peacekeepers cannot effect political cures. Indeed, they are doing well just to hold on. But in Lebanon, the US bought into two myths: that one party could restore order by force, and that its own units could both ally with that party and be immune to the consequences.